

From THE KING JAMES BIBLE (1611)
THE FIRST BOOKE OF MOSES, called GENESIS.
CHAP. XI.

1 One language in the world. 3 The building of Babel. 5 The confusion of tongues. 10 The generations of Shem. 27 The generations of Terah the father of Abram. 31 Terah goeth from Vr to Haran.

1 And the whole earth was of one language,¹ and of one speach.²

2 And it came to passe as they iourneyed from the East, that they found a plaine in the land of Shinar, and they dwelt there.

3 And they sayd one to another;³ Goe to, let vs make bricke, and burne them thorowly.⁴ And they had bricke for stone, and slime had they for mortar.

4 And they said; Goe to, let vs build vs a city and a tower, whose top may reach vnto heauen, and let vs make vs a name, lest we be scattered abroad vpon the face of the whole earth.

5 And the LORD came downe to see the city and the tower, which the children of men builded.

6 And the LORD said; Behold, the people is one, and they haue all one language: and this they begin to doe: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they haue imagined to doe.

7 Goe to, let vs go downe, and there cōfound their language, that they may not vnderstand one anothers spech.

8 So the LORD scattered them abroad from thence, vpon the face of all the earth: and they left off to build the Citie.

9 Therefore is the name of it called Babel,⁵ because the LORD did there confound the language of all the earth: and from thence did the LORD scatter them abroad vpon the face of all the earth.

¹ Hebr. lippe.

² Heb. words.

³ Heb. a man said to his neighbour.

⁴ Heb. burne them to a burning.

⁵ That is, Confusion.

At this point the language looks so much like contemporary English that it can be read with ease. However, there remain some differences, in part because the King James Bible used language that was conservative even for the year 1611.

Orthography.

Identify and comment on the spelling conventions that are different today.

Find examples of the possessive. Is the apostrophe+s used here?

What does the line above the vowel in cōfound signify? Where does that spelling convention arise from?

Phonology

The word *speech* appears with that spelling in verse 7, but *speach* in verse 1. If the Middle English had an open -e- for the vowel (as it did) then what would the pronunciation be about 1611? Which spelling is more consistent with other words with the same vowel?

Morphology

This passage does not show it, but the KJB used *his* for the neuter possessive pronoun (today *its*), and used *thou/thee/thine* as distinct from the plural forms. List the other pronoun forms found in the passage.

List the past tense verbs and past participles.

Syntax

List the various uses of *did*.

List instances of word order that would differ today.